

ROOTS – VIEWING GUIDE 1

Synopsis

Roots opens in the year 1750 in Gambia, Africa, in the village of a Mandingo tribe. A woman in labor is being assisted by other women of the tribe. Her husband is pacing outside their hut. The woman gives birth to a son, Kunta Kinte. Kunta Kinte's life with his family and in his village is traced through adolescence. The film then moves to Annapolis, Maryland, in 1765. There a sea captain is receiving instructions for his next assignment. Captain Davies is surprised to learn that he has been assigned to a slave ship, the Lord Ligonier. He reluctantly accepts the position and is introduced to the business of slave trading by his first mate, Mr. Slater.

Back in Gambia, Kunta is taken into the woods with several other boys his age to undergo manhood training, a rites of passage ritual. At manhood training, Kunta meets the tribe's great wrestler. Kunta displays courage and determination during wrestling training. The Wrestler takes a special interest in Kunta. Kunta is sent on an independent mission to catch a bird alive and bring it back to the training camp. While out chasing the bird, Kunta literally runs into a girl named Fanta who is preparing a meal for her family. Kunta is chased and caught by Fanta's father and ordered to apologize to her. After leaving the girl and her father, Kunta sees a caravan in the woods. He hides just in time and watches as Africans in neck harnesses are pushed along by a white man with a gun. Kunta is alarmed and runs as fast as he can back to the training camp to alert his tribe's leaders that he has seen white men.

Key Concepts & Suggested Topics for Family Discussion

- Mandingo family structure and village culture
- Key relationships in Kunta's life
 - Kunta and his father
 - Kunta and his mother
 - Kunta and the Wrestler
 - Kunta and his friend
- Changes in Kunta's character and values as he grows older
- Mandingo manhood training - passage from childhood to adulthood
- Kunta's actions in adversity and difficult situations
- The struggles of conscience faced by Captain Davies
- Cultural misconceptions

ROOTS – VIEWING GUIDE 2

Synopsis

Kunta and his peers return to the village of Juffure as men. They are greeted by the entire village in a celebration of dance and music. Kunta's father has prepared a hut for him, so Kunta goes to his family's hut to collect his belongings. When he sees his mother, he reacts coldly to her, reminding her of his new, higher social status as a man of the village. When Kunta goes to move into his hut, he is visited by his grandmother who reprimands him for his attitude and suggests that he rectify the situation with his mother by giving a present to his younger brother. Kunta decides he will make a drum for his brother. The next day Kunta goes to find wood for a drum; he is chased and captured by slave catchers. Kunta is tied up with a group of captives and taken to a holding pen on the coast. The men of his village search for him but find only a pouch that had been given to him by his father. They are able to deduce what has happened to Kunta.

Meanwhile the Lord Ligonier has landed on the Gambian coast. Captain Davies meets the slave trader stationed on the coast and agrees to the number of slaves he will purchase. The trader promises to deliver but asks for a few days to get more slaves. Captain Davies is clearly unnerved by the entire process.

Kunta is soon joined in the holding pen by the Wrestler and Fanta. The Wrestler encourages Kunta to try to survive. The captives are then taken aboard the Lord Ligonier and chained together in the hold of the ship. The Wrestler continues to teach and lead Kunta by reminding him of the characteristics of a Mandingo warrior. The Wrestler has a plan to unite the captives though they speak many different languages. The Wrestler and Kunta begin to organize a revolt.

Key Concepts & Suggested Topics for Family Discussion

- The brutality of the African slave trade
- Beliefs and values used as sources of strength when faced with adversity
- Perseverance through crisis situations
- Mr. Slater's beliefs that slaves are just cargo and represent profits
- Captain Davies's perceptions of Africans and the voyage (Middle Passage) vs. Mr. Slater's perceptions – Example:

“What is it that they're saying there Mr. Slater?”

“How would a white man know that sir? African mumbo jumbo is what it is more than likely.”

“Mr. Slater, I don't understand a syllable of their language, but I believe I can guess what they're saying down there.”

“What might that be sir?”

“They're telling us to sleep lightly Mr. Slater, and I've not slept well since this voyage began.”

- Gender roles in history - the roles of women

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Synopsis

In the hold of the Lord Ligonier, the Wrestler and Kunta instruct the captives to attempt to communicate with the people chained closest to them to unify the group. The next day the captives are brought on deck to be danced (exercised). Some female captives are chased around the deck by crew members. One of these girls is Fanta. The male captives' anger escalates as they watch. Kunta is particularly angry because his friend Fanta is one of the girls being chased. One of the girls jumps overboard in desperation and Mr. Slater is furious with his crew because of the financial loss. As Mr. Slater verbally and physically scolds the crew members responsible for the situation, Kunta and the Wrestler seize the opportunity to signal the revolt. The captives charge at the crew and fighting commences. Both Mr. Slater and the Wrestler die in the battle. A young boy in the crew finally gets to the canon and fires a shot that ends the rebellion.

The Lord Ligonier arrives in Annapolis, Maryland. The captives are first inspected and "doctored-up" by a physician. From there they are taken to the auction block to be sold as slaves. Kunta watches as Fanta is examined and purchased by a Mr. Carver. He vows that he will see her again someday. Next, Kunta is up for auction. Many of the men comment that Kunta's eyes and mannerisms suggest he is not yet "broken." Nonetheless, Kunta is sold to Mr. John Reynolds of Spotsylvania County, VA. Mr. Reynolds's driver, Fiddler, an older, American-born slave, takes Kunta to begin the trip to the Reynolds Plantation.

Key Concepts & Suggested Topics for Family Discussion

- Contrast and comparison of feelings toward the deaths of Mr. Slater and the Wrestler
- Traits and teachings Kunta will take from the Wrestler
- The effects of the voyage on Captain Davies
- Differences in Kunta and Fanta's coping with enslavement
- Kunta's introduction to America
- Justification of slavery: Africans as property, animals
- The slave industry: businesses and occupations related to slavery in Colonial America

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Synopsis

On the way to the Reynolds Plantation, Mr. Reynolds, Fiddler, and Kunta stop on the side of the road as Fiddler fixes one of the horses' shoes. Mr. Reynolds charges Fiddler with the responsibility of "breaking" and teaching Kunta. Reynolds commands that Kunta should speak "the king's English" by Reynolds's birthday. When they arrive on the plantation, both Reynolds and Fiddler are flanked by women and children hoping for treats and presents brought from town. Fiddler shows Kunta to the other slaves and warns them to stay away from him as Kunta is an African who does not yet understand what it means to be a slave and to live in America.

The plantation overseer, Mr. Ames, appears troubled by the news that the new slave will be Fiddler's responsibility. Mr. Ames is an indentured servant who does not believe the theory that slaves have inferior mental ability. He therefore is very suspicious of the slaves and lords over them through power and fear.

Fiddler works with Kunta to teach him the ways of slave life. Kunta learns some words of English and he learns how to work in the fields. He remains in chains though, as he refuses to accept the name Toby and has asked Fiddler about escaping. One day while working in the fields, Kunta finds a sharp piece of iron. He hides it and takes it back to his quarters. There he begins to saw his leg irons, and after a few days he breaks free. When Fiddler finds Kunta's leg irons broken, he is devastated. Though Fiddler is angered by Kunta's lack of consideration for him, he has no choice but to wish Kunta well and send him off. Kunta escapes into the night hoping to find freedom.

Key Concepts & Suggested Topics for Family Discussion

- Perceptions of slaves born in Africa vs. slaves born in America
- Rationalization of slavery by whites: white superiority myth
- Slaves' lack of personal rights in every aspect of life
- Role of music in slaves' struggle for survival
- Role of white women in colonial life
- Growing relationship between Kunta and Fiddler
- The accepted use of the word "nigger" in colonial society

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Synopsis

Kunta is running from the Reynolds Plantation. It is nighttime as Kunta runs through the woods with the remnants of the leg irons weighing him down. When he grows tired, he finds a place to sleep in a hollowed-out log. At daybreak, Kunta awakens and is pleasantly surprised to find that snow has fallen. As Kunta experiments with snow, he hears the sounds of dogs barking and knows he is being pursued. He tries to run but is caught by the dogs and Mr. Ames's band. Mr. Ames drags Kunta back to the plantation and orders all the slaves outside to see the runaway punished.

When Fiddler sees Kunta being dragged home, he rushes to Mr. Reynolds to plead for a lighter punishment for himself and Kunta. Mr. Reynolds ignores Fiddler's request. Kunta is strung up and whipped until he answers to the name Toby. Kunta holds out as long as he can, but near death, he gives in and answers to his new name. Kunta falls to the ground when he is cut down. Fiddler comes to soothe and nurse him.

Key Concepts & Suggested Topics for Family Discussion

- Kunta's refusal to accept the name Toby
- Significance of Mr. Ames's demanding Kunta accept the name Toby
- Control of slaves through public brutality
- Fiddler's relationship with Master Reynolds
- Fiddler's internal conflicts during the segment

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Synopsis

September 27, 1776 - Spotsylvania County, VA. Kunta is 26 years old. The tobacco on the Reynolds Plantation has just been harvested and is being loaded on wagons for market. One of the wagon drivers is impressed by Kunta's strength and would like to take him along to unload in town. Mr. Ames refuses to let Kunta (Toby) go, as he does not want him to have any geographical awareness beyond the plantation. As Kunta loads the wagons, he gets an idea for escape. He leaves himself a space on one of the wagons, covering it over with a blanket. While everyone on the plantation is at a harvest celebration, Kunta will sneak away on the wagon.

At the harvest celebration, Mr. Reynolds and his brother, Dr. Reynolds, discuss financial matters on the porch. Dr. Reynolds needs the money his brother owes him because he needs more slaves to work his fields. Dr. Reynolds is also troubled by his brother's drinking. Fiddler goes to call Kunta to the harvest celebration and walks in as Kunta is praying to Allah in his cabin. Fiddler quickly suspects that Kunta plans to escape and tries to talk him out of running away. Since Kunta insists on leaving, Fiddler resolves to help him get away. Fiddler promises to play his very best at the celebration so that all will be distracted as Kunta makes his escape.

Kunta's plan succeeds, and he finds his way to the Carver Plantation. Reynolds soon realizes Kunta has escaped and hires slave catchers to hunt for Kunta. Reynolds then fires Mr. Ames for letting Kunta get away again.

Kunta hides in a barn on the Carver Plantation and is discovered by a slave after nightfall. He describes Fanta to the man; the man recognizes the description as that of a woman named Maggie and sends Maggie to the barn. Fanta (Maggie) and Kunta are reunited, but when Kunta speaks to Fanta in their native language, she says she no longer remembers the language. In fact, she wants to be called Maggie. Kunta is hurt by Fanta's assimilation and her apparent acceptance of slavery.

Key Concepts & Suggested Topics for Family Discussion

- Kunta's adaptation to slave life
- Traditions Kunta holds from Africa
- What is freedom?
- Laws used to enforce slavery
- Fanta's attitude toward her African heritage

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Synopsis

It is morning and Kunta and Fanta are in the barn on the Carver Plantation. Kunta is describing his plan to go north. He wants Fanta to escape with him, but Fanta refuses. Meanwhile, the slave catchers stop at the Carver Plantation to rest their horses. When Kunta and Fanta begin to argue loudly in the barn, they are discovered. Kunta tries to get away but does not get very far before he is caught. The slave catchers cut off part of Kunta's foot as punishment for escaping and return him to Mr. Reynolds's plantation.

Days later, Kunta is in a coma. When he regains consciousness, he learns he is on Dr. Reynolds's plantation. Kunta, Fiddler, and several other slaves have been sold to the doctor by Mr. Reynolds as payment for his debts. Dr. Reynolds's cook, Bell, cares for Kunta. Kunta is devastated about the mutilation of his foot and has no will to live. An aging Fiddler tries to console and exhort him. Bell has obviously grown fond of her charge and has made special crutches for him. She challenges him to come (walk) to dinner at her cabin when he gets hungry.

Later, Bell returns to Kunta's cabin with a pair of old boots she has altered to fit him. Kunta does not want the boots. He says that he will not need them because he will never walk again. Bell leads proud Kunta into an argument, making him so angry that he tries to come after her. Bell's face lights up as Kunta takes his first steps. Kunta is also excited. He declares that he will do more than learn to walk, he will learn to run.

Key Concepts & Suggested Topics for Family Discussion

- Fanta's way of coping with slavery vs. Kunta's way of coping
- Slave catcher brutality
- Characteristics of Bell
- Kunta's emotions/ feelings during his recovery

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Synopsis

Bell has persuaded Dr. Reynolds to make Kunta his driver. Bell asks Kunta to promise her he will not use his new status as driver to escape. Kunta refuses to make such a promise. Later, Kunta makes Bell a grinding pot as a gift of thanks. She invites him to dinner at her cabin. Over their meal, they talk and realize their mutual affection for each other. After some wise counsel from Fiddler, Kunta proposes to Bell. Bell agrees and the two "jump the broom" (marriage ceremony).

Kunta and Fiddler accompany Dr. Reynolds to a Thanksgiving celebration at a neighboring plantation. Fiddler goes inside with Dr. Reynolds to play for the guests while Kunta is tending to the horses. Kunta hears drumming nearby and follows the sound. He meets a fellow African man who tells Kunta of his plans to escape north and possibly return to Africa. Kunta decides to join the drummer in escaping north. In a few days, the man will play his drum signaling to Kunta that it is time to escape. Kunta says he will listen for and heed the call of the drum. When Kunta returns home and tells Bell about escaping, Bell is very upset. She then shares with Kunta the story of her first husband and two children who were sold when the children were just babies. Bell reveals to Kunta that she is pregnant; she wants this family to be stable and safe.

Bell gives birth to a baby girl. Kunta wants to name her Kizzy, which is a Mandinkan word for "stay put." Kunta is worried that Dr. Reynolds will reject the name because it is not Christian. Kunta sits under a tree with Fiddler discussing the name. Fiddler has his fiddle with him and decides that he wants to play a song for himself. He says he is tired of playing what white folks want to hear. As Kunta contemplates his daughter's name and Fiddler plays his song, Fiddler quietly passes away. In grief, Kunta remarks that Fiddler finally knows what it is like to be free.

In the Mandinka tradition, Kunta takes Kizzy to be named when she is eight days old. Bell is reticent but gives in to the idea. Kunta takes Kizzy to a secluded spot outdoors and holds her up to the sky to declare her name. After the naming ceremony, Kunta hears the call of the drums signaling the escape. He is torn as he contemplates leaving but decides to stay. That night Kunta tells baby Kizzy of her ancestors in Africa, reciting the oral history of their people.

Key Concepts & Suggested Topics for Family Discussion

- Slave marriages - jumping the broom
- Fiddler's view of white people and slavery
- Fiddler's life in retrospect
- Difference in Kunta and Bell's views on slavery and freedom
- Kunta's decision to stay with his new family
- Importance of Kunta relaying his heritage to his daughter

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Synopsis

Kizzy is a young woman. She is being courted by Noah, a young man on the plantation. Kunta is not fond of Noah. Kizzy is excited that Missy Anne, “old Master” Reynolds’s daughter and Kizzy's childhood friend, is coming to visit. Sitting in the kitchen with her parents, Kizzy spells her name out. Bell sharply scolds her, warning Kizzy that she could cause much trouble if anyone knew she could write. Kizzy explains that Missy Anne taught her to read and write when they were children.

On the day that Missy Anne is to visit, all of the slaves stand in the yard eagerly awaiting her arrival. The moment Missy Anne arrives, she asks for Kizzy. Kizzy helps Missy Anne unpack. Meanwhile, Noah goes to Kunta to ask his advice on escaping. Kunta first tries to discourage Noah but then concedes to tell Noah what he knows. Back in the room, Missy Anne asks Kizzy to read a passage from the Bible as Missy Anne had taught her years ago. Kizzy begins to read just as Dr. Reynolds walks into the room. Missy Anne quickly tries to make the excuse that they were just practicing a trick, that Kizzy cannot truly read. Dr. Reynolds does not fully believe Missy Anne's excuse; he scolds Kizzy.

Noah tells Kizzy he plans to escape. When a neighbor, Tom Moore, stops in to inform Dr. Reynolds of an attempted revolt on a nearby plantation, Kizzy overhears his description of the patrollers that are roaming the area. That night Noah packs to leave, ignoring Kizzy's pleas for him to stay. Since she can't talk him out of going, Kizzy tries to insure his success by writing a traveling pass for him.

Kunta and Kizzy go to deliver a horse to Missy Anne on the old Reynolds Plantation. They are stopped by patrollers who have already caught a few runaways. They show their traveling passes and are allowed to go. Missy Anne and Kizzy picnic together, and Missy Anne presents Kizzy with a special idea. She wants Kizzy to become her personal slave and live with her on the old Reynolds Plantation. Kizzy is not very enthusiastic about the idea. Missy Anne is offended. Nevertheless, Missy Anne will ask Kunta and Belle for their consent.

When Dr. Reynolds gets word of Noah’s escape, he sends catchers after him. Noah is quickly caught and brought back to the plantation. He is beaten until he discloses from whom he obtained the traveling pass. Dr. Reynolds sends for Kunta and Belle. He tells them Noah has confessed that Kizzy gave him the traveling pass and that he will sell Kizzy to another plantation. Bell begs for mercy, reminding him of her forty years of faithful service. He is not persuaded. Kizzy is sold to Mr. Tom Moore. As Kizzy is dragged away, she pleads with Missy Anne to help her. Missy Anne is angry at Kizzy for betraying her trust and refuses to help. Bell and Kunta are left crying as Kizzy is taken away to the Moore Plantation.

Key Concepts & Suggested Topics for Family Discussion

- Kunta's perception of slavery, family, and whites now that he is older
- Reasons for prohibiting reading and writing among slaves
- "Friendship" between some whites and blacks (e.g., Missy Anne and Kizzy)
- Missy Anne's ideology on the superiority of whites and males
- Noah's escape and the ramifications of his capture
- Fairness of Dr. Reynolds's plantation rules
- Kunta and Bell's grief and other reactions to the selling of their daughter

ROOTS – VIEWING GUIDE 10

Synopsis

1824 – Caswell County, NC – Moore Plantation, 18 years later.

Kizzy has had a son, George. His father is Tom Moore. Georgie helps Master Moore with cock fighting. A Mr. Bennett comes to visit Tom Moore regarding cock fighting. Mr. Bennett's driver, Sam, flirts with Kizzy, but she ignores his advances. Georgie is an entertainer among his friends and the young women on the plantation. He performs an imitation of the preacher for a crowd of giggling young ladies. The preacher's daughter, Matilda, is offended by Georgie's mocking, particularly because she likes George and wishes he would be less of a jester.

After a time, Kizzy befriends Sam and shares with him that Georgie does not know Master Moore is his father. Sam and Kizzy continue their courtship and plan to be married. Kizzy will leave the Moore Plantation with Mr. Bennett and Sam. One day while out on a horse and buggy ride, Kizzy asks Sam to take her back to Dr. Reynolds's plantation to look for her parents. Sam is reluctant, fearing they will get back too late, but he agrees. At the Reynolds Plantation, Kizzy finds out that Kunta Kinte has died, and Bell has been sold to another plantation. At his grave, Kizzy tells Kunta about his grandson George and assures him that she will keep the family's oral history alive. She takes a rock and scratches the name "Toby," replacing it with "Kunta Kinte."

Sam and Kizzy rush back to the Moore Plantation as Sam needs to have the horses and buggy back by nightfall. They get back late and Mr. Bennett is very upset. Sam begs his forgiveness; Kizzy is repulsed by Sam's servility. Later when Sam comes to check on Kizzy's packing, Kizzy tells Sam she no longer wants to marry him. The following day Mr. Bennett and Sam leave.

Tom Moore makes Georgie his head trainer, and Georgie takes on the nickname, Chicken George. Kizzy is disappointed by George's seeming satisfaction with slave status. George explains that he too wants to be free, but he will do it his own way. He plans to marry Matilda, become a successful cockfighter, and possibly buy his freedom.

Key Concepts & Suggested Topics for Family Discussion

- Aspects of Kunta Kinte that can be seen in Kizzy
- Kizzy's decision not to marry Sam
- Georgie's admiration of and trust in Master Moore
- Kizzy's belief in the value of freedom
- Georgie's plans for freedom and the future vs. those of his grandfather, Kunta Kinte

ROOTS - VIEWING GUIDE 11

Synopsis

1841 – Seventeen years later.

At a cockfight, Chicken George meets a man who saved his earnings from cockfights and bought his freedom. The man encourages Chicken George to do the same. On the way home, Chicken George contemplates this advice while drunk Tom Moore sleeps in the back of the wagon. They are stopped by white men who are searching for slaves connected to a recent slave uprising in South Hampton County, Virginia. The rebellion, led by a slave named Nat Turner, resulted in the deaths of several whites. These events stirred panic and paranoia in the white community. After questioning Chicken George and speaking condescendingly to Tom Moore, the men leave. When Chicken George arrives at the plantation, a gun-wielding Mrs. Moore confronts him. In a state of hysteria, she accuses Chicken George of killing Tom Moore; she cannot see him asleep in the back of the wagon. She fires shots at Chicken George, but he escapes her range unharmed.

Back at his cabin, Chicken George discusses the situation with his family. He is confident that Tom Moore will not react the way other whites have reacted because he and Tom Moore are friends. Kizzy disagrees saying that whites and blacks cannot be friends. George holds to his belief until Tom Moore barges in with a shotgun demanding all of the family's cooking knives. After Tom Moore leaves, George begins to figure the cost of buying his family's freedom. He estimates this cost at \$6,000.

Matilda, George's wife, discovers a dead body while working in the field. She alerts George who is working near her, and they examine the body. They suppose it is one of the men connected to Nat Turner's rebellion. They find a gun near the body and bury it in the field. That day a wealthy cockfighter from England, Squire James, comes to see Tom Moore with a proposition to buy Chicken George and his family. He wants Chicken George to work with him in cockfighting and promises to set Chicken George free after five years. Tom Moore refuses the offer and George is so enraged, he digs the gun out of the ground and goes to kill Tom. Kizzy tries to stop him and finally resorts to telling him that Tom Moore is his father. George tells Tom he does not want to fight chickens for him anymore. Tom threatens to sell George's wife or son if George does not continue cockfighting.

Tom Moore and Chicken George go to a cockfight and compete against Squire James and another Englishman. The Englishman challenges Tom to a \$10,000 bet. Tom Moore takes Chicken George aside and promises him his freedom if he will ensure that Tom wins. Chicken George is elated and promises his best fight; Tom increases the bet to \$20,000. Chicken George works passionately, but they lose. Tom Moore does not have enough money to pay the debt and agrees to settle the bet by allowing Chicken George to go to England with Squire James for three years. Tom Moore promises to set George free when he returns from England. When Chicken George is leaving, Kizzy asks him to recite for the children the story of their heritage.

Key Concepts & Suggested Topics for Family Discussion

- Buying one's freedom
- Nat Turner's rebellion and the ensuing hysteria of whites
- George's changing relationship with Tom Moore
- George's plan for freedom
- George's reaction to learning that Tom Moore is his father
- George's pride in his heritage – passing down the story of Kunta Kinte to his children

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Synopsis

A carriage driver who is asking for directions and a drink of water for the lady he is chauffeuring approaches Kizzy at the well. When Kizzy goes to give the water to the woman, she recognizes that the woman is Missy Anne. Kizzy asks the woman if she is Missy Anne and if she remembers her. The woman confirms that she is Missy Anne but denies knowing anyone named Kizzy. Missy Anne asks Kizzy to refill the cup and before returning with the second drink, Kizzy spits in the water.

1861- 14 years later, Alamance County, NC

Tom Moore has sold his slaves to the Harvey Plantation. Chicken George, dressed in fine clothing, returns from Europe and rides onto the Harvey Plantation on a white horse. Chicken George first meets Irene, his son Tom's wife. She takes him immediately to Tom, who is a blacksmith. Tom is overjoyed to see his dad after so many years. Chicken George then goes to find his wife Matilda at her cabin. They reunite and he tells her the big news – Tom Moore has granted him his freedom. Matilda shares that Momma Kizzy has passed away.

Chicken George entertains his children and grandchildren with stories about his time in England. Mr. Harvey has agreed to let Chicken George stay on the property as long as he works. Chicken George and Tom go into town to purchase supplies. Evan Brett, a storeowner and a former county sheriff, meets them. Brett belittles them and informs Chicken George of the law that says he will be considered a slave again if he stays in the state more than sixty days. The Civil War begins. Chicken George chooses to maintain his freedom by moving away from his family in Alamance County. He recites the story of the family heritage before he leaves.

Tom finds a young white man stealing from Colonel Evan Brett's storeroom. Tom frightens the man away but is left holding the bag of goods when Colonel Brett enters. Tom is accused of stealing and is beaten. Later as Irene and Matilda nurse Tom's injuries, the young man comes to their door begging for food. Tom recognizes him but allows him to stay and eat. The man's name is also George so they give him the nickname "Ol' George" to distinguish him from Chicken George. Ol' George hungrily eats the food and asks if his pregnant wife Martha can come in to eat also; she is hiding outside. Tom and his family suggest that Ol' George ask Mr. Harvey for a job. Ol' George takes their advice and secures a job from Mr. Harvey as an overseer. Ol' George accepts the position but admits to Tom he does not know how to be an overseer. Tom and his brother Lewis role-play to teach Ol' George how to be an overseer who is convincing to whites yet kind to blacks. Martha goes into labor, but the baby does not survive the delivery. Ol' George, Martha, and the slaves hold a funeral for the baby.

Jimmy Brett sneaks into Tom's blacksmith shop. The Confederates have lost the war, and Jimmy has deserted the army. He asks Tom to go to his home to get his civilian clothes for him to escape. Tom agrees to the favor in the hope that it will spark a new relationship with Jimmy Brett. While Tom is gone, Irene comes to the shop to look for him and finds Jimmy Brett instead. Jimmy makes advances at Irene. When she refuses, he attempts to force himself on her. Tom comes in during the struggle. In rage, he kills Jimmy Brett. In the days following, Colonel Brett searches for his brother Jimmy. Colonel Brett is suspicious of Tom and warns him that he is being watched.

Key Concepts & Suggested Topics for Family Discussion

- George and his family's pride in his freedom
- Laws used to control and oppress free blacks
- The Bretts' treatment of blacks, slave and free
- Ol' George and his wife, Martha
- Lewis and Tom's demonstration that prejudice is learned
- Jimmy Brett's betrayal of Tom's trust

ROOTS – VIEWING GUIDE 13

Synopsis

April 10, 1866

An official telegram is read in town announcing the defeat of the Confederate army and the end of the Civil War. Lewis hears the news and races back to tell the others. All celebrate, including Ol' George and Martha. Mr. Harvey comes to talk to the ex-slaves. He is not sure what life will be like now that they are free but proposes the idea of sharecropping.

In town the Senator and Colonel Brett discuss another way to keep blacks in submission. On the Harvey Plantation, the ex-slaves meet in Tom's cabin to discuss what they should do now that they are free. Tom points to their lack of education, suggesting they stay and sharecrop on the plantation. Lewis disagrees with Tom; he wants to leave the plantation and see the world. Back in town, a group of white men meet with the Senator and Colonel Brett to discuss what they could do to protect the status quo. Some of the men disagree with the unlawful suggestions, and they leave the meeting. The remaining men propose and agree on a sharecropping system designed to keep the former slaves in bondage.

Irene comes running to Tom and others in the field with the news that President Lincoln has been killed. The blacks and Ol' George are devastated; they hold a memorial service for Lincoln. That night, nightmen ride through the Harvey Plantation and burn some of the property. After they leave, Tom devises a plan to learn the identities of the nightmen. Tom will make special markings on the bottom of every horse he shoes. If the nightmen come again, he will be able to check the hoof prints. Mr. Harvey is so distressed by the burnings on his property and his lack of money, he decides to sell his property to the Senator and leave town. Before he leaves, he gets agreement from the Senator that the debts of all of his workers will be forgiven. The Senator agrees to cancel the debts.

Key Concepts & Suggested Topics for Family Discussion

- Understanding what freedom means after the Civil War
- Tom's leadership role
- Characteristics of Tom that might be tracked back to his ancestors
- Colonel Brett and some other whites' attitudes towards blacks after the War
- The nightmen and organized violence after the War

ROOTS – VIEWING GUIDE 14

Synopsis

The nightmen ride again and leave their marked horseshoe prints in the ground. Tom is able to identify each one. The black families, Ol' George, and Martha get together to decide what to do with their information. In distrust, Lewis turns on Ol' George at the meeting. Lewis wants revenge and suggests the black men get revenge on their own. Tom disagrees, insisting that Ol' George is like family and that they must live by the law. Tom decides to go to the sheriff's office. When Tom tells the sheriff who the nightmen are and displays his evidence, the sheriff thanks him and says he will take care of everything.

Back at the Harvey Plantation, Tom goes to visit Ol' George and Martha who are still reacting to Lewis's accusation and betrayal. Martha wants to leave the Harvey Plantation. The Senator comes to introduce himself as the new owner of the plantation and to set forth the terms of the sharecropping arrangement. All are disheartened when the Senator reneges on his promise to Mr. Harvey to forgive all the workers' debts. Again, the Senator asks Ol' George to be the overseer.

The Sheriff tells Evan Brett that he knows the identities of the nightmen because Tom Harvey told him. The Sheriff says he will alert the federal court unless something happens to Tom Harvey. Evan Brett is calmly filling flour sacks and smoking a cigar as he listens to this news. He then gets the idea to burn eyeholes in the flour sacks to make a special hood for the nightmen. With newly-fashioned hoods, the nightmen go after Tom Harvey. They arrive at his home and order him outside. Tom's family and friends come out and watch as he is bound to a tree to be whipped. Ol' George peeks reluctantly out of a window until he finally decides to intervene. Evan Brett orders Ol' George to administer the whipping, leaving Ol' George no other choice. Ol' George begins whipping Tom and scolding him verbally. Ol' George continues this performance until a satisfied Evan Brett leads the nightmen away. Everyone is so grateful to Ol' George. They realize that his was the best possible solution since Evan Brett might have killed Tom if he had whipped him himself. Lewis apologizes and admits he judged Ol' George wrongly. While Irene nurses Tom's wounds, they discuss what should be done next.

Martha takes Tom's son Bud outside for fresh air, and Bud talks about getting revenge on whites. Martha reminds him that she too is white. She teaches him that his anger is justified for the nightmen's actions, but that he should not be angry at people because of their race. Later inside the cabin, they are startled by the sound of someone approaching. They blow out the candles, and Tom draws a gun he had taken from Jimmy Brett. They order the person to open the door slowly, and they are pleasantly surprised to see Chicken George.

Chicken George has brought his own land in Tennessee and has come for them all. He has a plan for their escape. They proceed carefully to take steps to escape the Senator and his sharecropping system.

First, Ol' George establishes himself as a capable, credible overseer in the eyes of Evan Brett. He belittles Tom in front of a group of white men in town. Evan Brett commends Ol' George for his control over Tom. Next, Irene goes to the sheriff and pleads for him to drop the complaint her husband filed against the nightmen. She says they do not want any more trouble. Later, when Tom obeys and serves him a drink of water in town, Evan believes that Tom has learned his lesson. The Senator cautions Brett that things may be too good to be true. The

Senator and Evan Brett decide to pay a visit to the plantation to witness first hand the change of heart among the workers. They are so impressed that Evan Brett agrees to give Ol' George six mules for his fields. When the visitors are out of sight, a boy in a tree gives a whistle and everyone immediately drops the façade and goes back to normal business.

Martha rushes into town to Evan Brett, urging him to come help Ol' George who has broken a leg. Brett rushes out to the plantation to find he has been set up. Tom Harvey and Ol' George tie Evan Brett to a tree to whip him. Tom stands with the whip in his hand but cannot bring himself to whip Brett. The ex-slaves, along with Ol' George and Martha, pack their wagons and head to Tennessee. Evan Brett is left tied to a tree on the Harvey Plantation. They arrive on their own land and before they settle in, Chicken George Moore pulls his grandson to himself and begins to recite the family's oral history beginning with the African named Kunta Kinte. George's son, Tom Harvey, joins his father in telling the story as all gather around. There in Henning, Tennessee, Kunta Kinte's descendants begin their life of freedom.

Key Concepts & Suggested Topics for Family Discussion

- Changes in Lewis's feelings toward all white men over the course of the segment
- Tom's faith in the law and his willingness to give it a chance
- The Sheriff's struggle between upholding the new laws and maintaining the old ways
- Ol' George's saving Tom's life from the nightriders
- Bud and Martha's conversation about his desire for revenge on all white people
- Chicken George's plan for leaving
- Tom's decision not to retaliate against Evan Brett
- Significance of reciting the family history upon arrival on their own land

Notes to Parents

One of the qualities that makes *Roots* so compelling and valuable is its candid presentation of historical and universal social issues. As we reviewed and edited the series for our purposes, we sought to preserve this quality. We did, however, omit scenes we found either inappropriate for sixth grade or unessential to our educational objectives. Such scenes are noted here by segment. Also noted are segments that contain material of a sensitive nature. While we will address this material in our debriefing activities, your child may benefit from further discussion at home.

Segment 1:

- Circumcision scene omitted
- Partial nudity within the context of Mandinkan culture

Segment 2:

- Derogatory slang in reference to race and gender
- Brutality of the African slave trade
- Captain Davies's conversation with Mr. Slater in the captain's quarters omitted

Segment 4:

- Anguished mother attempting to console daughter before she goes into overseer's cabin – it is implied she will be raped
- Common, widespread use of the word "nigger" begins

Segment 5:

- Brutality of whipping scene – Kunta Kinte captured after running away

Segment 6:

- Implied love scene between Kunta Kinte and Fanta omitted

Segment 8:

- Seduction scene between Toby and Genelva omitted
- Picnic scene with Mrs. Reynolds and Dr. Reynolds omitted

Segment 10:

- Scene in which Tom Moore rapes Kizzy omitted
- Segment beginning with George and Matilda in barn to Sam and Kizzy on road to Reynolds Plantation omitted

Segment 14:

- Brutality of whipping scene – Tom Moore whipped by nightmen